

LOVING LIKE JESUS LOVES ME
40 Days of Love – Part 2
Rick Warren

Jesus: “I’m giving you a new commandment: Love each other in the same way that I have loved you.” John 13:34 (GW)

“I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you!” John 13:15 (NLT)

1. _____ LIKE JESUS _____
“The Father gives me my people. Every one of them will come to me, and I WILL ALWAYS ACCEPT THEM.” John 6:37 (NCV)

“Even if my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me.” Ps. 27:10 (NIV)

“Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:7 (CEV)

God did not send his son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. John 3:17 (NLT)

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.” Rom. 15:7 (NIV)

*“We must bear the “burden” of being considerate of the doubts and fears of others...”
Rom. 15:2a (LB)*

Action Step

This week I will show acceptance to _____
Someone who irritates you or is hard to love

2. _____ LIKE JESUS _____
“Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted! Do not be afraid. You are worth far more than many sparrows.” Luke 12:6-7 (NAB)

VALUE DEPENDS ON _____
Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. 1 Timothy 4:4 (NIV)

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Eph. 2:10 (NIV)

VALUE DEPENDS ON _____

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“He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.”
1 Peter 1:19 (NLT)

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!” Isaiah 49:15-16 (NIV)

“Treat everyone you meet with dignity.” 1 Peter 2:17 (MSG)

Jesus looked at him and loved him. Mark 10:21 (NIV)

Action Step

This week I will affirm the value of _____
Someone who has low self-worth

3. _____ **LIKE JESUS** _____
“I am the God who forgives your sins, and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you.” Isa. 43:25 (GN)

Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. Ephesians 1:4 (NLT)

“There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 8:1 (NIV)

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”
Matt. 26:28 (NIV)

“You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Col. 3:13 (NLT)

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:37 (NIV)

“Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?”
Matt. 18:33 (NLT)

Action Step

This week I will offer forgiveness to _____
Someone who has hurt you or is carrying a load of guilt or shame

4. _____ **LIKE JESUS** _____
If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.
1 Corinthians 13:7 (LB)

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“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” John 17:18 (NIV)

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. Matthew 17:20 (NIV)

Jesus said, “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Mark 9:23 (NIV)

“Then Jesus told them, “I assure you, if you have faith and don’t doubt you can do things like this and much more...” Matt. 21:21 (NLT)

“The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.” John 14:12 (NLT)

“I want us to help each other with the faith we have. Your faith will help me, and my faith will help you.” Rom. 1:12 (NCV)

“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Heb. 10:24 (NIV)

Action Step

This week I will demonstrate trust in _____
Someone you see has potential for growth: “I believe in you!”

“May you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is.” Eph. 3:18 (NLT)

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Good evening Wood Memorial! We're glad you're here. In Part two of 40 Days of Love. You can just call me *the Love Doctor!* If you missed either of the first two messages, the introductory message or part one, I highly recommend you go to the website and listen to the first two messages that I did in the series because I'm building each week on how do you build strong relationships. And again, my goal for you during these forty days is that you have better relationships and you become an expert at love. I want you to become a pro at love. I want you to become a master. I want you to get a black belt in love. I want you to get the gold medal, the blue ribbon. I want you to be the very best world class lover that anybody knows in genuine love.

The best way to learn anything is to learn by a model. When we see somebody else doing it and go, "Oh, that's how you do it! I've got that!" We always learn faster, quicker and deeper when somebody gives us an example. Who is the best example for love? It's Jesus Christ. Jesus was the only person with perfect love, with perfect understanding of relationships.

In John 13 Jesus said, *"I'm giving you a new commandment, love each other in the same way that I have loved you."* Circle "in the same way." Jesus says the way that I have modeled for you, the way that I have loved you I want you to pass that on to other people. I'm the model and the way that I love you is the way I want you to love other people. John 13:15 *"I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."*

You can't fully understand how to love other people until first you understand how much God loves you. You cannot offer to other people what you don't possess yourself. You can't be gracious to others if you haven't felt God's grace. You can't be merciful to others if you haven't felt God's mercy. You can't be loving to others unless you understand how much God loves you. When you get that, when you feel it, when you understand the incredible, audacious, indescribable love that God has for you and you feel it in your life, then you're going to be a whole lot more loving of other people. It's going to be a whole lot easier for you to love other people.

Today we're going to do two things. Number one, we're going to look at how much God really does love you and I really want you to experience this today. Then second we're going to look at how God wants you to pass it on to other people.

Let's get right into it. We're going to look at four ways that Jesus loves you.

1. First, I must accept others the way Jesus accepts me.

Followers of Jesus ought to be the most accepting people in the world. The fact is the deepest wounds you've ever had in your life bar none are the wounds of rejection. Those are the things that hurt you the most. When you've been rejected. When somebody's put you down. Maybe you've been betrayed. Maybe you've been belittled. Maybe you've been told that you were worthless or not worth anything or you're never going to amount to anything. In those deep wounds of rejection are your deepest hurts.

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We've all had them. We've had them from parents. You've had them from peers on the playground. You've had them from partners. You may have had them from a former spouse. You've had them from professionals in your career. Everybody experiences rejection in life. We spend most of our lives trying to avoid it.

In fact, most of what you do is a combination of trying to be accepted by other people and trying to avoid rejection. It affects the kind of clothes you wear – you don't want to be rejected. It affects the way you style your hair. It affects the kind of car you drive, the career you choose, how you relate to other people – everything in your life is touched in some way by the fear of 'I don't want to be rejected' and the desire of 'I want to be accepted.'

In fact, people will do crazy, crazy things in order to be accepted. Have you noticed this? Remember when you were a kid and you were dared to do something you really didn't want to do, but you also wanted to fit in? They'd say "I dare you to do this." And you really didn't want to do it but more than anything else you didn't want to be rejected. You wanted to be accepted. You wanted to be in the group. So you did it anyway.

There is this myth out there that if I could just be perfect then everybody would love me. If I could just be perfect, if I never did anything wrong, even if I am imperfect if I don't show any imperfections, then everybody's going to love me and nobody's going to reject me and everybody's going to accept me.

Friends, that's just wrong. Jesus was perfect and they nailed him to a cross. No matter what you do, I hate to tell you this, but somebody's not going to like you. No matter what you do, somebody's going to disagree. Somebody is going to reject you.

So the starting point in learning to love other people is you have to realize how much God accepts you.

How does Jesus love you? John 6 *"The Father gives me my people. Every one of them will come to me, and I will always accept them."* Circle "always". That means all the time. Jesus says I will always, always, always accept them. It's not a conditional acceptance. He says I will always accept you.

Here at church we talk a lot about accepting Jesus. You've probably heard this phrase "Have you accepted Jesus? Have you accepted Christ into your life? Have you accepted the Lord?" Maybe you've done that. Maybe you've accepted Jesus into your life.

Have you ever realized that he's accepted you? You can be a Christian, you can be a follower of Jesus all your life and never really feel accepted by God. You feel like God's always putting you down, that God's always blaming you, that God's always on your case. That no matter what you do it's not good enough.

Where that comes from is not from God. It comes from un-pleasable parents. Many people grew up with un-pleasable parents. Everybody grew up with conditional love because nobody loves unconditionally all the time. We learn love like, "I love you if... you do these things. Or I love you because... you do these things." So we learn conditional love.

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But God says, no, I just love you, period! I don't love you because of who you are but because of who I am. Not because of what you do, but because of what I've done. Not because of your conduct, but because of my character.

So we have to learn to love the way that God loves us. God says, I love you unconditionally. I will always accept you.

That's hard because, again, many of you grew up with un-pleasable parents. No matter what you did it wasn't good enough. If you got C's on your report card they wanted B's. If you got B's they wanted A's. If you got A's they wanted straight A's. No matter what it was you always felt like, I'm not measuring up to Dad's expectations. I'm not measuring up to Mom's expectations. I'm just a big disappointment. They let you know in certain and uncertain ways that you were a disappointment.

Even today as a grown adult you're still trying to earn the approval of un-pleasable parents. In fact, your parents may be dead but in your mind you're still thinking "I'm going to show them! I'm going to show them that I'm valuable, that I'm acceptable, that I'm worthwhile."

Let me just say something to you as your teacher, as your friend, as somebody who loves you. If you haven't got your parents' approval by now, you aren't going to get it. I'm sorry to tell you that. It has nothing to do with you, it has everything to do with them. Hurt people hurt people. If you haven't got your parents' approval by now you're not going to get it.

But here's the good news: you don't need it to be happy! There are six and a half billion people in the world. If two people don't like you so what? I like you. God likes you. There are other people who like you. If two un-pleasable parents say No, I can find a whole lot of other people who'll say Yes.

The Bible says this *"Even if my mother and father forsake me the Lord will receive me."* That's how much God loves you. He says I'm going to accept you no matter what. In fact, look at how he does it.

Titus 3:7 *"Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable. He made us acceptable to God and he gave us the hope of eternal life."* How does he make us acceptable? By his grace. He just says, "You're acceptable." It's not that you changed. It's not that you got any better. It's not that you are perfect. It's not that you never sin. No, you're going to sin the rest of your life. Jesus just says I'm going to make you acceptable by my grace. It's not based on performance.

God wants you to do that with other people but one of the problems is most people don't know the difference between acceptance and approval. Very, very different. Jesus Christ accepts you completely. He loves you and accepts you. That doesn't mean he approves of everything you do. No, he doesn't do that. But he accepts you.

You can accept someone without approving of what they do. Without approving of their lifestyle, without approving of the way they're living.

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A good example is one day Jesus was walking down the street and some religious leaders who were trying to trap Jesus caught this woman in the act of adultery. It's interesting they didn't catch the guy. Usually, it seems like there's two. Maybe it was different two thousand years ago but it usually takes two. But it says they caught *the woman* in the act of adultery. They bring her before Jesus and throw her down before Jesus. This woman was caught cheating on her husband. What are you going to do about it, Jesus?

You know this famous story. Jesus looks at all of the accusers and says, "Ok, anybody who has never sinned, you get to throw the first stone." And of course they all start going away.

What is Jesus doing here? He's giving acceptance, not approval. He didn't approve of what she was doing. The first thing that Jesus did was he defended her dignity. He said, I'm not going to let anybody treat a woman like that. I don't care what she's done. They all leave. He defends her dignity.

Which, by the way, when you come to Jesus Christ and you've got messed up in your life, you've got sins and faults and failures and mistakes he's not going to go, "See? I told you so." He's going to defend your dignity. He accepts you.

Then in the private one on one moment after everybody's gone in a personal moment with Jesus, he looks at this woman and says, "Where are your attackers?" And she says, "They're all gone, Lord." He says, "*Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.*"

That's it? That's all he's going to say? He says I don't condemn you either just don't do it any more. If it had been me I'd pull out my eight-point sermon on adultery. Let me tell you why you're evil, wicked, mean, bad and nasty. You shouldn't do this. It hurt you, it hurt him, it hurt them, it hurt the kids.

You know what I've discovered? You don't have to make people feel guilty. That's why we don't waste any time here at Wood Memorial trying to make people feel guilty. Why? Because we already do. I don't measure up to my own standards, much less God's. If I've had fifteen wrecks in a car, I don't wake up on Sunday morning going, "Honey, let's drive up to the courthouse and let the judge tell us what bad drivers we are." No, that doesn't do any good. I want somebody to teach me how to be a better driver. I want somebody to save me from myself.

So when you come to Jesus with all your sins and your mistakes and your faults and your failures he doesn't go, You're right. No, he defends your dignity and then he says, "You know better than that. You're better than that. Don't do that any more." That's it. He doesn't go in and pound you into the ground. As we said last week, love doesn't rub it in, love rubs it out. So Jesus didn't approve of what she had been doing. But he did accept her.

That's what you need to do with other people around you. You don't have to go around approving of everything, everybody does. I don't even approve of everything I do. But you do have to accept them. Because that is a mark of love.

The Bible says that God chose to accept us. He *chose* to accept us and make us acceptable to God.

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Being chosen is a great thrill. It really does a lot for your self-esteem. If you remember when you were a kid, the last thing you wanted was to be the last person chosen on a team. When they were picking up sides – oh, God, please don't let me be the last person chosen! If you were one of the few fortunate that got chosen first on a team you go, "I'm pretty hot stuff. I got chosen first!"

I have pretty good self-confidence. I'm a pretty confident person. You know why? Because I was chosen by Kay Warren! Out of all the men on the earth, she chose me! Too bad for you guys. But Kay Warren chose me and that makes my spirit soar. She looked at me and said, "That guy is a hunk of burning love." That makes my confidence soar.

And when God chooses you it makes your confidence soar. You say, "Wait a minute! God chose me?" Yeah. God says, I accept you. I love you. I created you. I sent Jesus to die for you. I chose you. I put my Spirit in you. You matter to me. So it really doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. I've said many times if God likes me and I like me, if you don't like me what's your problem. That's where confidence comes from. Not by listening to the approval of other people. But by listening to what God says about you.

Here's the point. What God does for you, he expects you to do for other people. God says I accept you unconditionally. I don't approve of everything you do but I accept you unconditionally and I love you. And God says I want you to do that with everybody in your life. Romans 15:7 *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you."* He says you are to do for other people what I have done for you.

How do you do that? One of the ways you can show acceptance to other people is to listen to them. And another way you can show it is to look at them. We talked about this a couple weeks ago. The highest form of love is focused attention. When I look you in the face, eye to eye, I'm saying, You matter to me. You are valuable to me. It's like the little child that says, "Look me in the face, daddy!"

When you give your attention, love looks and love listens. When somebody comes in and drops something off at your desk and you don't say anything you don't pay any attention to it, when somebody serves you something at a fast food or the waitress comes to deliver it and you don't look them in the eye and say, "Thank you." You are saying you don't value them. I don't value you. You're not important to me. What you're saying when you look them in the eye and you listen, then you're paying attention. You are accepting them.

The Bible says in Romans 15:2 *"We must bear the burden of being considerate of the doubts and the fears of others."* Everybody's got doubts and everybody's got fears. I do and you do. I don't know if you've noticed this but my fears are perfectly rational and reasonable and yours are totally stupid. When you're afraid of something and I go, "How could you be afraid of that?" My fears, they make a whole lot of sense. But yours are stupid. That means I don't accept you.

Husband, when your wife is afraid of something you shouldn't go, "That's dumb!" That means you don't accept her. Or when your kids are afraid of something and you don't value that and you don't treat them with value "You shouldn't be afraid of that!" That means you don't accept them.

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Acceptance says I listen to the fears and the doubt of others. I've got doubts. You've got doubts. Somebody has doubts, "I doubt if God exists. I have doubts about Jesus. I have doubts about the Bible." Fine. This is the church you ought to be in. This is the place for people with doubts because we treat you here with respect and love because everybody's got doubts. I have a lot of questions. When I get to heaven I'm going to go, "God, why did you do that? If I was God, I wouldn't have done that." Aren't you glad I'm not God?

What you need to do is say, "Fine. We've all got doubts." I've wanted to put up a sign at Wood Memorial Church that says, "No perfect people need apply. Please go to another church." Everybody has fears and doubts. Acceptance means we accept each other's fears and we accept each other's doubts.

During 40 Days of Love we're going to work on this stuff together. I told you, we're going to teach you the habits of the heart and the skills for genuine loving. Here's our homework for week number two: practicing love. The first action step says "This week I will show acceptance to..." I want you to write in the name of somebody specific. Somebody who really irritates you. Don't look at them. Or is hard to love. Don't elbow them. In fact, don't write down the name of anybody on your row. Just in case they happen to see it. Don't write down a family member – yeah you can work on somebody in your family too, but that doesn't count. I want you to choose somebody that you have a hard time accepting. You know that person at work who just irritates you. They're heavenly sandpaper. Nobody likes them. Everybody's irritated by them. People talk about them behind their back. They make fun of them behind their back. Nobody wants to go to lunch with them. They're so cantankerous and irritable. You know who I'm talking about.

These are EGR people – Extra Grace Required. Everybody knows who they are in the office. In fact, if you don't know instantly who I'm talking about right now, I'm sorry – it's you. You need to love yourself. But if you know who that person is, write that person's name down. The most unlovely person you know. The most unlovely people are unloved people. They need doses of love.

This week when we work on love I want you to show acceptance to somebody who really irritates you or is hard to love. When you start thinking, "Lord, I don't want to love that person!" You start thinking about how much God loves you.

Loving like Jesus means I've got to accept other people the way Jesus accepts me.

2. Loving like Jesus means I must **value others the way Jesus values me.**

How valuable are you? I'm not talking about your valuables. How much are you worth? Maybe not as much after this week's stock market. I'm not talking about your net worth. I'm talking about your self worth. How much are you worth?

Let me tell you how worthwhile you are. You are infinitely valuable to God. First, God created you. Second, Jesus died for you. Third, he puts his Spirit within you. Fourth, he wants you to be with him forever in eternity. That's how valuable you are to God. You are infinitely valuable to God.

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Jesus said this in Luke 12 *“Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? [In other words they’re not very valuable.] Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. [He says God even notices little birdies! God even notices cockroaches. God notices everything because everything he made he values. Then he says this “Even the hairs on your head [including the ones that fell out in the sink this morning] have all been counted! Do not be afraid. You are worth far more than many sparrows.” He says if God thinks sparrows are valuable, how much more valuable are you because he sent his Son to die for you.*

I love this verse in the message paraphrase. It says *“God pays even greater attention to you down to the last detail. [You know God pays attention to every detail in your life? The little wart here God noticed. Down to the last detail.] Even numbering the hairs on your head. So don’t be intimidated by all this bully talk. You’re worth more than a million canaries.”*

What makes something valuable? There are two things that make something valuable.

The first is who made it. Value depends on who made it. What is more valuable, a Faberge Easter egg or my Easter eggs. The ones that I color with my grandkids. Nothing. There’s no comparison. What’s more valuable a Picasso or a drawing by Doug Fields? You know automatically. Sometimes something that’s created by somebody because it’s who created it makes it valuable.

I don’t normally collect barf bags. But I have a barf bag in my collection, an airline barf bag. Because it’s signed by John Wooden, the most winning coach of UCLA basketball. It’s not because it’s valuable but because who created it made it valuable. A well known creator can increase the value of a common thing.

So who created you? God did. God created you. What does that mean? It means you’re valuable.

“Everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it’s received with thanksgiving.” God doesn’t create junk. God created you and you’re not junk. You are good! You’re really good. Because God created you.

“For we are God’s workmanship [that word in Greek – “workmanship” – literally means “masterpiece.” It’s poem. I am a poem of God. I’m a piece of art. You are God’s masterpiece. That’s what the Bible says about you. I didn’t say that. I don’t think you’re a masterpiece but God does.] We are God’s masterpiece, God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.” In other words before you were born God planned out what he wanted you to do with your life. He said you’re my masterpiece and you’re exactly what God wants you to be.

So value depends on who made you. God made you.

Second, value depends on what someone will pay.

How much is your house worth? Not as much as you think it is. It’s worth whatever anybody will pay for it. I have a baseball card collection. How much are those cards worth? Not what I

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think they're worth. They're worth what anybody's willing to pay for it. How much is a piece of art worth? It's only worth what somebody's willing to pay for it.

I heard recently about an oil sheik in the Middle East, his daughter was kidnapped. They took out an ad in the paper that said, "We will pay any price. She's the king's daughter."

You are a child of the king. You were created by God and Christ gave his life for you. 1 Peter says "*He [God] paid for you with the precious life blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.*" How much are you worth? Look at the cross. Jesus said, I'm willing to die for you. You are so worthwhile God says I'll pay the ultimate price. I'm willing to give my Son for you. That's how valuable you are.

You want to know how much you matter to God? You look at the cross. Jesus who had been whipped and beaten and tortured and scourged and nailed to the cross and with arms outstretched he's saying, "I love you this much. This is how much you matter to me. This much is how much you matter to me. I love you this much." The cross proves your value.

Let me get real pointed here. The people who told you growing up that you didn't matter, that you were worthless, that you'd never amount to anything, that you weren't worth squat were liars. They lied to you. They may have even been your parents but they lied to you. They may have said it in anger, they may have said it in hurt but the fact is it was a lie. You are valuable because God made you and you are valuable because Jesus paid for you. He died for all your sins. And God says you are worthy enough, you are valuable enough for me to send my Son to die for you. I'm willing to exchange my Son's life for yours.

Here's how much Jesus loves you. "*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion for the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!*" Did you know that when you get to heaven the only scars that you're going to see in heaven will be the scars on Jesus where he was nailed to the cross. Because for eternity people are going to be able to see, "This is how much I love you. See the nail prints in my hand? See the scars where they nailed me to the cross? I don't want you ever to forget, this is how much I love you. I have engraved you. I have tattooed you on the palms of my hands. I couldn't forget you. A mom might forget her baby but there's no way I'm ever going to forget you. Every time I look at my hands I think that's how much I love you."

You're not just worthy, you're not just acceptable, you are valuable. God says that's how much I value you.

Now Jesus says I want you to treat that kind of value to everybody else that I love too. Because I don't just love you that way, I love everybody else that way. Even the people you can't stand. I love them this much. So I expect you, if you're my child, to love these people the same way I love them because I died for them not just you. You better treat them the same way that I treat them. Value others the way Jesus values me.

How do you do that? 1 Peter 2:17 "Treat most people you meet with dignity...." No, I misread that! "*Treat everyone you meet with dignity.*" That means everybody. I looked up that word "everyone" in the Greek and you know what it means? It means *everyone!* That means there's

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no one you are allowed to not treat with dignity. You must treat everyone you meet. Even the people you agree with and disagree with. And like and don't like. Everyone with dignity.

How do you do that? There's a couple of ways.

One as I've said, by looking at them and listening to them. Looking and loving is a way of treating people with dignity.

One of my favorite verses in the Bible, Jesus was walking down the street and a young entrepreneur comes up to him and he asks him a question. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. *"Jesus looked at him and loved him."* He looked and he loved. You can't love without looking. That's why when people come and serve you – a waitress or anyone like that – and you don't pay any attention to them, you're not being very loving. When somebody serves you and you don't even look at them. You look and you listen. Love looks and love listens.

What am I talking about? I'm talking about just being polite. You don't have a right to be impolite to anyone.

This week I had to turn some laundry in at the cleaners. Mathew my son was sitting in the back seat. We pulled in and there was only one open space for parking in front of this laundry. Every other parking spot was taken. There were two young boys, maybe eight year old and ten year old standing there in that parking spot with their karate outfits on. They had their backs to me so they weren't aware that somebody wanted in that parking spot. I pulled up. I thought, I'm not in any hurry. I'll just wait. These kids will turn around and they'll see me and they'll move out of the way.

Matthew goes, Dad, why don't you honk? I said, Because it would scare them. If you're only ten feet away and you hear a honk behind you it'd kind of get your adrenaline going! I thought they'll eventually turn around and see me and they'll move out of the way. It was no big deal, just nothing.

These two boys were talking. All of a sudden they turn around and they see a car wants to get in there and they move out of the way.

I pulled in. I got out and I saw the guys and I said, So you guys like karate? What belt are you? I just asked them a couple of real simple questions. There was nothing to it. It was no skin off my nose! Just being nice.

I walk into the laundry and I leave my laundry. When I come back out I start to get in the car and I hear a voice behind me "Can I talk to you a minute?" I turn around and there's a man standing there. He said, "I noticed how you dealt with my boys. Aren't you a?" [WHEW!] I said, "No, I just had the flu. I'll get over it." He said, "I saw you on TV. I saw how you treated my boys. I'd like to go to a church like that." He's coming to church!

I was just polite. It was nothing. Really it was nothing. Yet we live in a world that is rude. And impolite and un-accepting and treats people like dirt. We would change Southern California if just Wood Memorial Church was nice to people. There are over a hundred thousand names on our church role. We would infect the entire community if we would just be nice to everybody.

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So look at the second homework assignment. “This week I will affirm the value of ...” I want you to write in somebody’s name there who has low self esteem, somebody that you can affirm the value of, you can affirm their value. When everybody else treats them like dirt, treats them like an outcast, treats them like they don’t matter, you treat them like they do matter because they do. They matter to God.

Write down a specific name. Don’t write somebody in your family because you can always do that. I’m talking about somebody outside your family. “I will show acceptance to and affirm the value of...”

Third way to love...

3. I must forgive others like Jesus forgives me.

Now we’re talking about a step up in being a genuine lover. Some people think that God carries grudges. They think that God’s always mad at them. They think that no matter what they do, whenever they have a problem, they think, God’s getting even with me. Like something fell apart this week so “God remembers what I did three weeks, or three months or three years or thirty years ago. Now God’s getting even with me. I know he’s doing that.”

Is that really the way God acts? No.

I did hear this week about a guy who everything went wrong in his life. On one day his wife walked out on him, his kid got suspended from school for drugs, he got fired and he smashed his car. He gets out of his car and he looks up into heaven and he goes, “Why me, God? Why me? Why me?” He hears this voice from heaven that says, “Because some people just tick me off!”

Is that the way God really responds to us? No. No. God does not carry grudges. All the payment for all the stuff you’ve done wrong, Jesus Christ took on the cross. You don’t have to pay for it. Jesus paid for it.

So God says I want you to learn to forgive others.

Teacher Tom is going to come talk about this one.

Tom:

What’s God really like? We grow up and we get this idea that he’s up in heaven waiting to zap me for something I do wrong. But here’s what he’s really like. Isaiah 43:25 *“I am the God who forgives your sins [not the God who is waiting to get you, I’m the God who forgives your sins] and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you.”* That’s who God is. God is a God who wants to forgive. Who has done everything he can to forgive our sins in Christ.

Here’s the amazing thing about this. He’s been planning to do this for a long time. Ephesians *“Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and*

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without fault in his eyes.” Even before you were born, even before the world was made God was already planning in Christ to forgive your sins. That’s amazing.

Just think about that for a minute. All the guilt that’s in your life, God made a plan for that guilt, to give you forgiveness even before you were born. He knows every wrong thing I’m going to do, every wrong thing you’re going to do. None of it is a surprise to him. None of it. It’s not like “I’m really disappointed in you today. I didn’t see that one coming. Look at what you did today.” Never. God knows everything we’re going to do and he’s already planned to forgive us in Jesus Christ.

So that’s why God can say this *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* You might circle the word “no.” Not a little bit of condemnation or less condemnation. There is absolutely no condemnation because of what Jesus Christ did for us. There’s no condemnation but that’s not at no cost by the way. The next verse in Matthew, reminds us that Jesus said, *“This is the blood of my covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin.”* It came at the cost of Jesus’ blood. He gave his life so that you and I can be forgiven. Because of that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That means unconditional, complete, consistent, eternal, by grace forgiveness in all of our lives. What a relief! What a relief that I don’t have to pay for my own sins, make up for my own sins, suffer for my sins somehow in eternity. It’s paid for by Jesus Christ. I am forgiven.

Once I recognize that, that he’s forgiven me, then I’m enabled, I’m strengthened to forgive other people in my life.

These next verses talk about how you and I can do that. The Bible says this in Colossians 3:13 *“You must make allowance for each other’s faults [I hate it that the Bible says that. Don’t you in some way? I want other people to make allowance for my faults but do you like it when you have to make allowance for other people’s faults. It’s tough to do. But the Bible says make allowance for other people’s faults.] and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”*

And Jesus said this in Luke 6 *“Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn...”* let’s stop there for a minute. If you feel like Christians are sent into the world to condemn the world you’ve got it all wrong. Jesus didn’t come into the world to condemn the world. In fact he said it. He said, I didn’t come to condemn the world I came to save the world. And he sent us into the world for the very same thing. If you’re trying to condemn the world around you or think that’s what we’re here to do you’re going to be a miserable person. We didn’t come to condemn. When we do that we’re only going to be miserable. *“Do not condemn,”* Jesus said, *“and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.”*

Or at the end of a story that Jesus told once about mercy he said this *“Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant just as I have had mercy on you.”* Because God has given me so much mercy and forgiveness that gives me the ability to give it to others.

When I take a good look at myself I see the ugliness. I see the selfishness. I see the sin. But when I take a good look at God, *a good look*, I see the forgiveness that only he can give. When I get that forgiveness in my life then I’m able to give it to other people in their lives. I’m able to forgive others because I know that Jesus has forgiven me.

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So how about this one? Look at this action step. Who is there this week that you could forgive, that you could offer forgiveness to? It might be somebody who has hurt you. Somebody that you have been hurt by and you go to them and say “I’ve not talked to you for a long time. Let’s get this going again. Let’s connect again.” Or it might be somebody that you know who is just under a burden of guilt in their lives. They’re just hurting. You just need to let them know that God has forgiven them just like he’s forgiven all of us.

Write their name down then make plans this week to let them know about God’s forgiveness.

Rick:

If you’re going to become a world class lover you have to accept people the way God accepts you, you have to value people the way God values you, you have to forgive others the way God forgives you and the fourth one... This is important...

4. I must **believe in others like Jesus believes in me.**

Did you know that all around you are people with low self-esteem? Everybody has insecurities. Everybody. If you don’t think you’ve got insecurities, you’re in denial or you’re lying. Because you have insecurities.

In fact, I’ve discovered that even the more successful people become the more insecure they often become. Studies have shown that the younger you were when you first experienced rejection the more serious it is in your life. It’s almost like curse when people say, You’re not going to amount to anything. You don’t matter.

How do you reverse a curse? You start believing what Jesus says but you instead of believing what other people say about you. 1 Corinthians 13. This is the chapter we’re studying in all of our small groups. If you’re not in a group get in a group. Go out and sign up for one today. Or you’re going to miss the major part of 40 Days of Love if you’re not in a group. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13 *“If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him. Love believes. You will always believe in him. Always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground defending him. Love believes. When everybody else believes the worst, love believes the best.”* This is that God wants you to do.

It’s exactly what Jesus did. He affirmed people around him. Jesus looked at people and he didn’t see what they were. He saw what they could become. He saw their potential. He saw their growth. He saw what God intended for them to be. He brought out the best in people not by labeling them but saying, I believe you can do it. I know you can do it.

In fact, someday do a study of how many times Jesus said, You can do it! I believe in you. I know you can do this. Nothing will be impossible. If you trust me, get my Spirit inside of you and depend on my power you can do it. I believe in you. He said *“As you, Heavenly Father, sent me into the world I have sent them into the world.”*

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Think about this. Jesus trusted the future of the entire world to twelve fishermen. And one of them flamed out so it was only eleven. These are just normal guys. No high school, no college education. He spends three years with them saying, “Ok, guys, I believe in you. You can do this. Now you take this good news message to everybody else and you share it around the whole world. To Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the whole world, the Great Commission. I’m trusting you guys. I believe in you. I know you can do this.” Jesus goes back to heaven. The angels say, “Jesus, you died for all humanity. How are you going to spread the good news?” *I gave it to these eleven guys.* And the angels are going, “What’s your plan B?” And Jesus says, There is no plan B. I believe in these guys. I know they can do it. I’m going to trust them. And that is what God says about you.

Let me show you a series of verses. *“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there and it will move.’ Nothing will be impossible to you.”* Jesus is saying, You can do it. With faith you can do it. I believe in you. You can do it.

Jesus said, “Everything is possible for him who believes.” I believe in you. You can do it. With me in your heart and God’s Spirit and power in you, you can do it.

Jesus told them “I assure you, if you have faith and you don’t doubt you can do things like this [he’s talking about the miracles he had done.] and much, much more.”

In fact this is one of the most amazing verses. Jesus says *“The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works because I’m going to be with my Father.”* How is that possible? Here’s how it’s possible. When Jesus Christ was here physically in a body he could only be in one place at one time. Now Jesus can put his Spirit in me and you and millions of other people and he can be doing miracles in many places all at once. He can answer prayer in many places all at once. He says you can do it.

Jesus wants you to believe in others too. *He says “help each other with the faith that we have. Your faith will help me and my faith will help you.”*

In other words this is why you need to be in a small group. Sometimes you have a really tough week and you get the faith kicked out of you. You don’t have any faith. And you’re dead and you’re doubting and you’re down and depressed and discouraged. Maybe in despair. He says when you’re down the other people in your group will have faith for you. Then later when they’re getting the faith kicked out of them you can have faith for them. We help each other out. We don’t just believe in God. The Bible says if you’re going to be a believer that means believe not only in Jesus but believe in each other. If you’re going to be a follower of Jesus it means you believe not only in God and in Christ it means you believe in each other. That’s what the church is for. We believe in each other and we help each other through tough times and we are a family.

The Bible says we are to show love to each other. *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and to good deeds.”* We do that in our small groups.

Okay, let’s look at this last one. If I’m going to learn how to be a world class lover I’ve got to show acceptance to – and I hope you’ve written a name in – affirm the value of, offer forgiveness to and demonstrate trust in. Write down a person. Somebody specific this week. If all you do is listen to this message and you walk out of here and don’t do this, you’ve got

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nothing out of this. You've got squat. You need to have a project. Somebody you see who has the potential for growth that you can say, I believe in you. Maybe you can think of somebody who's been falsely accused of something and you need to go and say, I believe in you. Or maybe somebody you've questioned their motives. You need to go and say, I believe in you. Or somebody, who has potential that nobody else has seen and you need to say, I believe in you.

Psychologists tell us that your self image, how you see yourself is largely determined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. The way you feel about you is determined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you.

So as your friend, as your Teacher, somebody who loves you I'm telling you, you should make Jesus Christ the most important person in your life. He says you are valuable. You are acceptable. You are lovable. You are forgivable. You are capable. You need to stop listening to what everybody else is saying about you. You need to stop listening to what your conscious is saying to yourself. You need to make Jesus Christ the most important person in your life and listen to what he says about you. It really doesn't matter what other people say. What matters is what God says and who are you going to believe anyway?

Fred Craddock is a Teacher. He tells the story of the time he was vacationing in Gaitlenburg, Tennessee. Fred and his wife were seated at a table in a restaurant and an old man came up to them and asked, "Are you folks on vacation?" "Yes," said Fred, "and we're having a good time." The old man said, "So, what do you do for a living?" Fred said, "I'm a preacher." "Oh!" said the old man. "Let me tell you a preacher story."

He sat down by them. The old man said, "I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my father was. It was very, very hard on me growing up. The kids in school made fun of me. Growing up, I didn't have any friends at all. When I walked around our little town I always felt people were staring at me and looking at me and saying, 'I wonder who's the father of that boy.' I spent a lot of time by myself. I didn't have any friends. One day a Teacher came to town. Everybody was talking about how good he was. I had never gone to church but I decided I'd go to church and hear this guy. So I went. And he was good. So I kept going back. But each time I went to church I'd come in late and I'd leave early so I wouldn't have to talk to anybody. [sounds like a lot of you.] Then one Sunday I got so caught up listening that I forgot to leave early and the service ended and the people stood up and I couldn't get out the door. Suddenly I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. When I turned, that big tall Teacher was standing there with his hand on my shoulder looking at me and he said, 'What's your name, son? Whose boy are you? Whose son are you?' I just shook when I heard those words and I heard that question. But before I could say anything that Teacher said this, 'I know who you are. I know who your family is. You have a distinct family resemblance. You're the son of God!'" The man said, "You know, those words changed my life."

The old man got up and he left and a waitress came over a little bit later and said, "Do you know who you were talking to?" Fred said, no. She said, "That's Ben Hooper. Two time governor of Tennessee."

A man learned he was the child of God and it changed his whole direction. It changed his destiny. He learned he was valuable and acceptable and lovable and forgivable and capable. It changed the rest of his life. And all the opinions of other people didn't matter any more.

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I know without a doubt you've had wounds in your life. You've been hurt, no doubt. They're wounds from rejection by peers and parents and all the other people I've talked about. God cares. I care. This church cares. You need to make Jesus Christ the most important person in your life and start filling your mind with what he says. That is the starting point for love. You can't love others until you know how much God loves you. Ephesians 3:18 *"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep God's love really is."*

Prayer:

Thank you Father, that you can heal broken hearts and bitter memories and damaged self esteem and even the tears that are falling right now. Thank you. Thank you that we matter to you. Thank you that patterns can be erased and curse can be reversed. Thank you that you turn nobodies into somebodies. Jesus, I ask that you help people today, these dear friends of mine, you help them begin to see themselves through your eyes of love. Thank you that we can depend upon your love.

Now you pray. In your heart say this, "Dear Jesus Christ, help me to see myself the way you see me. Thank you for creating me. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for dying for me. I don't understand it all but thank you that you accept me and that you value me. And that you forgive me and that you believe in me. I want to believe in you. I want to trust you. Help me to care more about what you think of me than what other people think. May the truth set me free."

With our heads still bowed I want you to repeat these truths aloud after me: "Because of Jesus I am acceptable. I am valuable. I'm lovable. I am forgivable. And I am capable. Jesus, help me to see myself through your eyes of love. And help me to see others the same way. Amen"

[end of tape]